DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 642 HE 021 609

AUTHOR Ihle, Elizabeth L.
TITLE Southern College Women and "The Feminine Mystique."
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 5-9, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aspiration; Career Choice; Equal Education; *Feminism; Higher Education; Homemakers; *Identification (Psychology); Marriage; Private Colleges; Psychological Characteristics; Public Colleges; Role Models; Self Concept; Sex Role; United States History; Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS *Friedan (Betty); *United States (South)

ABSTRACT

A study on female graduates of Southern colleges and universities during the postwar period is presented. The focus is on how their experiences match the assertions of Betty Friedan in her book "The Feminine Mystique." Interviews were done with graduates of public and private, coeducational and women's, and black and white colleges. Factors examined to determine the variables explaining the degree to which the interviewees accepted the feminine mystique included the following: social class and race; parental education, employment, and expectations; choice of college and major; college experiences; role models; career expectations; and age of marriage. Role models and mentors played a major part in shaping many of the interviewees' lives. Some factors that caused college women during this time to ignore the calls of domesticity and pursue non-traditional graduate study are family support, socioeconomic background, desire to use education for social mobility, and sense of purpose instilled by the family. These interviews show several discrepancies with Friedan's study due to Friedan's perspective. For example, she tended to interview women from affluent and intellectual backgrounds who went to elite colleges. Though Friedan's book provides a rebuttal of the "sex is destiny" theme prevalent in the first two decades after World War II (thus reigniting the flames of feminism), many of its ideas that all women suffer from the feminine mystique (due to the bonds of domestic expectations) are grand generalizations according to this study. A copy of the interview questionnaire is provided along with statistical data. Contains 7 references. (SM)

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SOUTHERN COLLEGE WOMEN AND *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE*

Elizabeth L. Ihle

James Madison University
Harrisonburg, Virginia

American Educational Research Association

New Orleans

April, 1988

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In 1963 Betty Friedan published *The Feminist Mystique* which has since been credited as one of the primary forces in creating the feminist movement of the past two decades. Friedan maintained that young women of the post-war generation were pressured by society to accept and act upon the belief that women's central life role was bearing and raising children and maintaining a home for their husbands, an ideology which Friedan labeled the "feminist mystique." She argued that this pressure caused "the problem that has no name," a general malaise and sense of purposelessness stemming from women's lack of individual identities. In her words:

> It is my thesis that the core of the problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity--a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique. It is my thesis that as the Victorian culture did not permit women to accept or gratify their basic sexual needs, our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfull their potentialities as human beings, a need which is not solely defined by their sexual role." p. 69

Friedan supported her thesis in a number of ways. She examined Freudian psychology and concommitant sociological and anthropological studies and interviewed eighty women, many of whom were college graduates. She reinforced her argument by doing a content analysis of topics in women's magazines, which forcefully demonstrated a swing from the ideal of the career woman to the ideal of homemaker and wife. She examined the history of feminist protest in this country, pointing out that feminists who often decried the emphasis on women's domesticity were often ridiculed. She also cited alternatives in women's college curricula and

marketing strategies designed to increase women's role as consumers as further proof of the feminine mystique. These forces almost unanimously glorified women's special role as homemaker and ignored the dissatification of a growing number of women with the limitations of such a role.

The impact of this book was enormous and caused thousands of women across the country to re-examine their lives and priorities; I was among them and still consider reading this book a turning point in my life. Therefore, it is not surprising that I found myself taking another look at Friedan's book a quarter of a century later as I tried to interpret data that I had collected from a series of interviews of Southern women College graduates of the postwar period.

In 1987 I had received a small grant from James Madison University to do a series of interviews of women graduates of Southern colleges and universities. The purpose of the interviews was to provide insight on how Southern women perceived their college experiences; I was particularly interested in how women's college experiences of the times differed from men's. I used a focused interview format with prepared questions. See Appendix A.

Because I wanted a variety of kinds of colleges represented, I chose my colleges carefully. My interviewees included graduates of private black coeducational colleges, a private black women's college, a public historically black college, private white women's college, a state college for white women, private white colleges, and a public white coeducational college. After locating my subjects by asking various institutions' alumni offices for names of possible subjects, I contacted several potential subjects and

arranged interviews in two large Southern cities.

Coincidentally, five of my first six interviewees graduated in 1956 which gave me the idea for this paper. How did their experiences, I wondered, match Friedan's assertions? As I refined this idea, I decided to include more interviewees, whose graduation dates from Southern colleges extend nearly twenty years from 1949 to 1967, approximately the span of Friedan's book plus four years. Since new ideas sometimes drift South slowly, I thought adding an additional four years would not be inappropriate.

Choosing this span limited somewhat the types of institutions represented; they are a private black coeduational college, a private black woman's college; two private white coeducational colleges; a public coeducational college with a majority of male students; a public white women's college; and a private white women's college. (Since 1967, all the traditionally white schools in the study have admitted blacks.) Appendix B shows in abbreviated form the types of colleges represented and some of the conclusions from the interview process.

I examined a number of factors in trying to determine the variables that explained the degree to which my interviewees accepted the feminist mystique. These variables included social class and race; parental education, employment, and expectations; choice of college and major; college experiences; role models; career expectations; and age of marriage. Of the ten interviewees in this study, two were black and the remainder were white. Most were apparently middle class, but they were not specifically asked to put themselves to label themselves in that way. From their comments mainly about their parents' occupations, however, I gave

each person a class label.

Both black women came from middle or upper class families; the father of one was a mail carrier, and the other father was a minister. Both mothers worked only after the death of the husband, but their occupations were not mentioned. The minister's daughter, however, noted that she was the third generation in her family to attend college. The mother of the other black interviewee told her daughter to be prepared to earn a living and not to marry young, advice contrary to the feminine mystique.

The white interviewees had a wider range of economic backgrounds; two came from upper class, professional families, with the father of one being a doctor. Four were middle class with one's father operating a family business. Two came from farm families, and there was no indication that the farms were particularly prosperous. I labelled those two lower middle.

Parental education to a large degree seemed to parallel social class. The upper class black family had a three generation tradition of attending a particular private black coeducational college. The other black woman was the first in her family to attend college. A number of white women had parents with some college training. One even had a grandmother with a doctorate, and two had fathers who were medical doctors; one of those fathers was a medical school professor. In several cases the mother had more formal education than did the father who was sometimes self-educated. One of the interviewees from a farm family had parents who had not finished high school, but they had nevertheless insisted on college educations for all their children.

The reasons why and how the interviewees had gone to college

varied somewhat. In most cases, going to college was simply expected. For the two upper class white women, college seemed to be simply an interlude before marriage. Both women, good friends since childhood, went at first to a well known women's college because as one put it, "My father thought that was the only place young ladies should go, and at that age you didn't explore or visit all kinds of colleges." Both women transferred after their sophomore years to a private university near their home which had recently begun to admit women. Tradition played a part in the interviewees' college choices too. In two cases family ties to a particular institution were significant in college choice, and in another rebellion against parental wishes. Low cost, financial aid, and the chance for a quality education close to home were the decisive factors for several others.

One extremely important factor in shaping some of the interviewees' lives were role models and mentors. Two women mentioned graduates of their future colleges being influential in their college choice; as one of them said about an alumna from her college-to-be:

> She was just one of the most articulate, just effervescent persons...I had ever met and one of the most well qualified ones on that high school staff. She talked about _____ everyday; ...she was very influential in persuading some of the girls to go.

Another interviewee described the importance of other people at several critical junctures in her life. To the encouragement of a high school teacher, a male English teacher in this case, she attributed her being the only one of four siblings to attend college. After a lack of funds to continue prompted her to move to a large city to get a secretarial job, a distant female cousin in

that city, who herself had a non-traditional job as an air traffic controller, was a second influence; the cousin encouraged her instead to attend an engineering school which had just opened its doors to women.

Within the college years themselves, role models or mentors sometimes played an important part in enriching many student lives. Several women spoke with admiration and affection of professors of both sexes. However, praise was not evenly spread out among the faculty at different types of institutions.

The reliance on role models by interviewees at coeducational schools and the public women's college was not so strong as it was at the other institutions. The three white women at private coeducational institutions did not discuss many personal experiences with their professors. One pointed out that she had not received any mentoring from her professors but had not sought any either. Another, who was one of the first women to attend her newly coeducational institution and was the institution's first female Phi Beta Kappa member, had considered writing as a possible career, but one of her male professors had told her that her writing talents were suited only for a woman's magazine. One of those in a public women's college was lukewarm in their praise of her professors, maintaining that they were good teachers but did not encourage their students toward future careers. She said, "At the time I felt that they were probably above average; looking back, maybe comparing them with things that I know now, they were probably not quite as good as I thought they were." She thought that none of them had served as mentors. An alumna of that same college but ten years younger thought that her female professors

encouraged their female students to break into non-traditional fields.

The alumnae of private women's colleges and the private black colleges, however, reported somewhat different experiences. The graduate of a private black women's college reported that, "You learned for learning's sake, and they [the faculty] wanted you to be all that you could be, and they were going to pull it out of you if it was in you." The graduate of the black coeducational college, similarly spoke of the high expectations that the faculty had for their students and of the high regard in which she held two of her female education professors. A private white women's college interviewee spoke about being invited to her major professor's home for dessert and music. Another from the same college, who has maintained a relationship of over twenty years with the female head of her major department, noted that her school "wasn't just educating women in a perfunctory way; it was committed to developing women who were leaders."

Other women spoke of role models and mentors outside the classroom. The woman in engineering spoke highly of her college's female head librarian for whom she worked; "she allowed me to work as I needed to, and then she introduced me to people, she counseled with me, she encouraged me, she really taught me a lot--just plain how to get along in this environment." The president's wife was another source of support; in fact, my interviewee reported, "if I had to give credit for my 'making it' or success or whatever you want to call it, it would be to Mrs. _____." She entertained the student in her home, hired her to babysit when her grandchildren visited, and wielded power on campus. Connections like these may

not only have buttressed the student's support system but may also have smoothed the way with male professors reluctant to have women in their classes. Another interviewee spoke of working as a student aide in her college's library and how her experience eventually led to a master's in library science and a career as a librarian.

Several hypotheses might explain the women's differing degrees exposure to role models. All three women at the coeducational institutions lived at home, and two of those did not seem particularly involved in student life. Recent research indicates that being a commuter student at a largely residential institution is a barrier to socialization with faculty. (Tinto, 67) The third, a daughter of a faculty member, simply pointed out her lack of effort in seeking out her professors. None of them appeared to hold paid jobs on campus either, which today is considered as a positive factor in retaining college students. (Tinto, 67) Perhaps more in depth involvement in student life would have prompted more interaction with college faculty. Another possibility is that because none of the three had an definite career plans they had less incentive to seek out faculty. The career aspirations-role model loop may be a chicken-and-the-egg controversy. Perhaps the lack of role models forced the choice to buy into the feminist mystique and choose domestic sphere.

Another factor in these women's apparent lack of college mentors may have been their families' influence. Two of the three were solidly upper class where in the 1950s a daughter's going to college was a desirable option but not necessarily a ticket to future happiness and success. The two women revealed that many of

the girls in their private high school were not even in a college preparatory curriculum and than a number of their female college friends married before graduation. The third woman, the daughter of a medical college faculty, was aware that expectations for her brothers differed from those for herself and her sister. Her brothers were expected to become doctors; but she and her sister, if they entered the medical field at all, were to become nurses.

Another important factor to consider in examining why some women received more mentoring than others is the kind of school they attended. Both black women pointed out the message that they were expected to excel and to do their very best, which is not surprsing in that private black colleges were perceived to be the best of educational opportunities open to blacks at the time. The mandate to take advantage of that education was clear. Countless surveys indicate even today that a disproportionate share of today's black leaders come from black colleges, and the results of these interviews simply substantiate that such a tradition is a long-standing one. Similarly, the mentoring the alumnae of the private white women's college received may simply be a product of their schooling. Research by M. Elizabeth Tidball has demonstrated that women's colleges produce a higher proportion of women achievers than the size of their student bodies would indicate. (Hornaday, 76) My research cannot explain why the women at the public women's college did not receive the same incentive to achieve that those at the private one did. Perhaps the faculty/student ratio, less diversity in the student body, or simply the geographical location made the difference.

The interviewee who made the greatest use of mentors and role

models was the graduate of the engineering school. She chose to major in electrical engineering because of the department head's seeking her out. In an environment which was demanding and sometimes hostile (a few professors refused to let women into their classes), she obviously succeeded, and the mentoring that she received was certainly a factor in her success. Perhaps such an environment forced her to seek the counsel that encouraged her achievement, whereas some of the other women were in a more comfortable situation where personal initiative was not so critical to success.

Friedan does not directly use the terms *role model* or *mentor* her study, probably since the terms and their connotations were not so popular then as they are today. In one telling passage, however, the influence of negative role models was clear. The passage came from one of Friedan's interviewees in South Carolina:

> The only other kind of women I knew, growing up, were the old-maid high-school teachers; the librarian; the one woman doctor in our town who cut her hair like a man; and a few of my college professors. None of these women lived in the warm center of life as I had know it at home. Many had not married or had children. I dreaded being like them, even the ones who taught me truly to respect my own mind and use it, to feel that I had a part in the world (67-68).

My interviews of alumnae of the fifties and sixties did not turn up such negative role models, possibly because the interviewees felt uncomfortable in describing such a view to an interviewer who herself was obviously a female professional. At one point, an alumna from the private white women's college observed that most of the female faculty were single professional women but that they encouraged students to have careers with or

without marriage. Although in the fifties and sixties married but childless female faculty were still uncommon, married female faculty with children were even more so. The students then simply had few role models of married professionals with children. Female faculty at coeducational colleges were so uncommon that information about them was seldom offered.

One of the most damning sections in Friedan's book is a chapter entitled "The Sex-Directed Educators" which traces a trend of the 1950s to make the college curriculum for women more relevant to their future domestic roles, and a recent history of American women's higher education has supported her findings (Solomon, 191). The curricular change supported the idea of adding classes on marriage and family life for women students and altering others on the assumption that such a domestic future was the normal and desirable one for college women.

These ideas were based in part on two influential works of the 1940s, the popular press of the 1950s, and well known educators. The scholarly study *The Psychology of Women* published in 1944 by Freudian psychologist Helene Deutsch observed that women working outside the home were tormented by guilt feelings in regard to their children. Three years later Ferdinand Lundberg and Maryna Farnham published *The Lost Sex* which noted that women who tried to combine marriage, family, and career were psychologically disordered. Benjamin Spock's child-rearing manuals of the 1950s also supported the importance of women at home (Solomon, 194). Lynn White, president of Mills College, a well known women's college in California, was a leader in the curricular changes, noting in his 1950 book *Educating Our Daughters* that a feminine

college education should include "the theory and preparation of a Basque paella, or a well-marinated shish kabab" (Solomon, 192).

My interviews revealed little evidence of such curricular changes. Only one of my interviewees majored in a traditional female subject, elementary education, and no one mentioned having to take any particular course designed to prepare them for marriage and family life. The majority of the interviewees were liberal arts majors--English, history, humanities, German--and one of those pointed out clearly the fact that she personally and her family strongly valued a liberal arts education. Another interviewee, an alumna of the public women's college, chose business, but the degree program seemed to be a mix of today's business courses crossed with secretarial science; the other alumna of that college chose commercial art. The alumnae from the private women's college stressed their college's emphasis on academics, and the college's published history bears this out. In fact, although I have not investigated the curricular changes of all the colleges of my interviewees, I have found no evidence of the feminization of women's college curricula that Friedan and Solomon have documented.

The discrepancy between the curricular changes supposedly occurring nationwide and what the interviewees experienced could be explained in a number of ways. As every historian of education knows, educational innovation travels slowly. It may be that the changes had not trickled down to the South; since the majority of my interviewees graduated in 1956 or later, I am somewhat skeptical that the slow rate of educational innovation is a satisfactory explanation. Another possibility is related to the fact that a number of my interviewees attended newly coeducational colleges.

Perhaps those types of colleges had little interest in adjusting the curriculum to meet women's perceived special needs. Another might be that the suggested curricular changes took place only in certain majors like home economics; since none of the interviewees chose that major, they were not exposed to it. The most likely reason, I think, is none of those. Solomon and Friedan focussed their attention on primarily on nationally recognized women's colleges, mainly the Seven Sisters, and incorrectly assumed that colleges nationwide followed their lead. I question their assumption. Although I think Friedan is basically correct in her description and assessment of the "feminine mystique," I remain unconvinced that it dramtically altered the curricula experienced by a majority of college women.

A number of my interviewees worked while attending college which possibly affected their susceptibility to accepting the feminine mystique. In most of my interviews I asked only about work during college, but several volunteered that they worked summers too. Several obviously worked because they needed money, and in one case the work was simply figured in as financial aid. The alumna from the black woman's college had two jobs: one in the library for which she was paid and another unpaid responsibility assigned to every student for a residence hall housekeeping chore. Since this institution had had a long tradition of such assignments, interpreting them as manifestations of the feminine mystique would be erroneous. In some cases, the college workstudy position paid other than financial dividends; in the discussion of role models above, working in these positions led to futher exposure to role models and, in one case, to a future

career. In another, a student got experience working in an office, a work pattern that complemented her business major and offered her experience for her life's work. These results of the college work experience support the findings of a recent college study that repeatedly described the importance of these experiences in clarifying the career goals of college women who were already favorably disposed to working outside the home (Komarovsky, 135).

Three of the interviewees did not work at all during the college year but worked during the summer in family-related businesses. These were the three whom I perceived to be from the most affluent families, and at least one of the three did not seem to have a particularly demanding job. After completing their degrees, none of them worked for money for any significant length of time in the first two decades after their graduation.

From the data on my interviewees' college and summer work histories, it is possible to conclude that work during college was important to the interviewees for whom financing college was a problem. It can also be hypothesized that college work experiences reinforced the interviewees' proclivity to work once they had graduated and lessened the impact of the feminist mystique.

The interviewees' college work experiences could possibly have shaped their post-college plans as well. Although several went to college with a purpose and plan in mind, a number of others did not.

The three interviewees who had worked in their family businesses during summers were three of the four women who had the least concern about their post-college plans. Three of the four were also graduates of coeducational colleges, and all four

graduated in 1956 or earlier. One of them spent a year on an exchange fellowship immediately following graduation and then returned to school to work on a master's degree. The other three married shortly following graduation. Their experiences were more typical of the Southern upper class. As another Southern woman reminisced,

> As we had been 'gently reared'..., it didn't occur to us to subsidize our college education with part-time work. Southern girls were supposed to have a good time at school. The clever ones would make good grades, while the lucky ones would find husbands. (Baker, 92)

Other interviewees were aware that after their college graduation they were going to be employed and approrpriately prepared in college for such a future. One began college with the hopes of eventually working in a big city to work and majored in business. Another wanted to be a clothing designer, a third a director of religious education, and a fourth a teacher. None of their plans worked out. Their changes seemed to be more by accident than by design. A prerequisite for their major caught their interest, or they learned that their original major or selected career was not what they thought it would be. Their experiences in changing majors seem typical of many 18 to 21 college students today.

Both black interviewees felt a need to work; as one of the pointed out in referring to black women's long history of being in the paid workforce, "Black women have always been liberated." Both of them remarked, as did a number of other interviewees, that their sex limited their vocational choices. One of the black women became an elementary school teacher, explaining that in her family

the men became ministers and the women teachers. The other began and ended college as a history major, taught a year, and then earned a master's degree in library science. She had actually wanted a degree in religion but had realized that in the 1950s such a degree had no practical use for a woman.

Out of the ten interviewees, only two developed nontraditional careers immediately after their college graduation; one entered public relations and the other engineering. Six of the others became homemakers or teachers, while the ninth became a librarian and the tenth a secretary. Only three remained steadily in the workforce; two of those remained unmarried, and the engineer cut back her hours while her children were young.

By the standards of the 1950s and 60s, the choices most of the interviewees made seem fairly typical. Being female limited choices for all but the most intrepid. The engineer, the most nontraditional of the group, originally thought that her sex was actually a benefit in getting a job; however, when she sought a transfer to the company's office in another city, she was denied a position because the only openings were in sales, which were men's jobs. The fact that none of the interviewees seemed angry about their lack of options and accepted it with the philosophy that sex was a valid determiner of careers is evidence of the group's acceptance of the values of their time.

The feminine mystique, however, did not indicate that some careers were more acceptable to women than others. It maintained that women's proper sphere was the domestic one, and the early age of marriage in the late 40s, the 50s, and even the 60s support the acceptance of that role. After World War II, the average American

woman married at 22, and by 1957 the average age had dropped to 20; female college graduates expected to be married within one to three years after graduation (Solomon, 187 & 195). My interviewees fit that pattern. All but two had been married at one time, and all but one of those had married within a year of graduation. Most had had children shortly after marrying.

Friedan pointed out that getting married was a point of anxiety among many women. She reported that the proportion of women attending college in comparison with men dropped from 47% in 1920 to 35% in 1958 and that 60% of those women attending dropped out before graduation in order to marry or because they thought too much education would be a bar to future marriage (Friedan, 12). Although marriage emerged only as a tangential topic in my study, most interviewees just took their early marriages for granted. One noted that she had friends who were anxious about marriage but she was not. "I just assumed that I would [marry]," she reported; "I wasn't setting out to do that." Another had dated her husband for six years prior to their marriage and had made a conscious decision to finish college before marrying. She recalled, however, thinking for a brief period of time that she should go onto graduate school instead of marrying.

Friedan interpreted these early marriages as women's way of unconsciously choosing not to develop their own identities. By opting for marriage and early motherhood, they were avoiding coming to terms with who their adult selves were. According to Friedan, being someone's wife or mother gave these women a chance to escape from defining themselves. The domestic role seemed so right and normal that women were unable to perceive that women could have

private selves and be family women too. The results, according to Friedan, could be catastrophic:

> By choosing femininity over the painful growth to full identity, by never achieving the hard core of self that comes not from fantasy but from mastering reality, these girls are doomed to suffer ultimately that bored, diffuse feeling of purposelessness, non-existence, non-involvement with the world that can be called *anomie*, or lack of identity, or merely felt as the problem that has no name. (172)

If my interviewees can be considered a representative sample of Southern college-educated womanhood, then Friedan's prognosis of early marriage and motherhood is overly pessimistic. Only four of my interviewees had spent the majority of their adult lives as homemakers, and only one of those substantiated Friedan's claim:

> You were supposed to get married and have children and live happily ever after. That's all I was raised to do, and that's all I did, though I didn't live happily ever after. That wasn't enough for me; I was a well-educated woman, and I didn't understand what was wrong with me, what made me unhappy for a long time...Then suddenly I began to realize in the late 60s that I was reading in magazines and hearing women say the things that I said. It was the most liberating thing that has ever happened to me because it said I wasn't crazy. It freed me up.

She was subsequently divorced. The other homemakers reported little dissatisfaction with their lives and gave no evidence in their interviews of experiencing any identity crisis. Two of them had been able to afford domestic help and had done significant amounts of volunteer work. They seemed content with their lives but also realized by today's standards how different their lives were from those of most young married women today.

Actually the lifelong homemakers were also quite different from most of the other interviewees who had spent a significant

amount of their adult lives doing paid work. Friedan's study ignored these women for the most part, although even in the 50s their numbers were growing. In fact, despite the hype of domesticity, college women were increasingly entering the job market. By the early 1960s, nearly 60% of female college graduates worked as opposed to only 40% of female high school graduates (Solomon, 188). The experiences of my interviewees bear this out. Although some had taken off a few years when their children were young, they had re-entered the work force, an indication perhaps that the feminist mystique was not so strong as experts had assumed.

Solomon points out a number of factors which caused some college women in the postwar era to ignore the calls of domesticity and to pursue non-traditional graduate study. They include family support, the women's socioeconomic backgrounds, the desire to use education as a means of social mobility, and a sense of purpose instilled by their families (196-197). I think some of these variables encouraged a number of women in my study to do the same at the undergraduate level and that both Friedan and Solomon overestimate power of the media hype of domesticity in determining women's futures.

The most critical of these variables seemed to be women's socioeconomic backgrounds. Although the majority of the interviewees followed the trends of their time and married shortly after graduation, most of them also prepared for a career. I think that their career plans resulted from their class background, from middle or lower-middle class family circumstances that were generally unable to offer their unmarried daughters the option of

not working following graduation. One of my interviewees reported, in fact, that her family simply assumed that she would teach after graduating and was surprised to learn that she had majored in business. The four interviewees who did not make career plans came from upper or upper middle class families and apparently married shortly after finishing school; only one of those worked as long as a year after marriage.

It is hard to judge the strength of family support in the women's college attendance since all interviewees had some degree of support. Especially strong family encouragement was apparent in the two black families, one which had a three generation history of college attendance and the other a mother who wanted her daughter to be more capable of self-support than she had been. This evidence supports Solomon's assertion that black families were likely to send their daughters to college more frequently than their sons (191).

None of my interviewees revealed any desire to improve their social class as a motive for going to college. Yet two of my interviewees were the only children in their families to go to college and definitely improved their economic status (and consequently their social status) by their college graduation. I think that the reason for lack of this kind of motivation is that most of my interviewees already came from fairly well-established families that were relatively satisfied with their current social class. Had my interviewees come from lower class homes, their motivations might have been different. Furthermore, Solomon's criterion referred to graduate or professional education, not undergraduate work. Of my ten interviewees, only two earned

master's degrees. One came from an academic family; the other needed an MLS to become a librarian and within the last few years has begun working on her lifelong dream of earning a degree in theoology.

For most of my interviewees, I did not perceive a strong sense of purpose related to their education. For most of them, going to college was simply something that one did. They appeared interested in their studies (most were good students) but were not consumed by them. With that type of attitude, it is not surprising that most of them did not continue to graduate school. The main exceptions to this generalization were the black woman who was encouraged by her mother to become self-supporting and the engineer. The former pursued a graduate degree, developed a career, and did not marry. Perhaps in the 1950s marriage and a well developed career did not mix. The latter is the only one of the students who spoke of her need to repay student loans, which is obviously a strong incentive to remain in the workforce. Although she married about a year after her graduation, she continued to work.

Obviously, my small sample reveals a number of discrepancies with Friedan's study, but I think the problem lies more with Friedan's perspective than with my interviews. Although it might be possible to argue that my sample is unrepresentative of college-educated Southern womanhood, I doubt that adding women from other types of Southern colleges would significantly change the interview results. Various alumnae offices had given me names of potential interviewees, and so it might be assumed that all of them were loyal to their alma maters; I doubt again that that factor

would have made a difference in how my interviewees reported their reaction to the pressure of domestic femininity. Another possibility exists that I simply did not ask the right questions; since I did not specifically focus my questions around *The Feminist Mystique* it is quite possible that other questions would have elicited somewhat different responses. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the responses I received reflect much less consistency with Friedan's thesis than I would have anticipated. Although a few women remarked that they enjoyed their work, only one changed her domestic lifestyle and returned to the work from dissatisfaction with her homemaking role.

Friedan interviewed girls and women from colleges and universities all over the United States and noted that "The phenonomenon [of refusing to be intellectually challenged] does not confined to any particular college; one finds it among the girls in any college, or department of a college, which still exposes students to the life of the mind" (147). I disagree; although she may have found academic uninterest in some students and in some colleges, I do not think it was universal in the South. Instead, I think that the discrepancy between Friedan's research and mine lies in her perspective that was unduly shaped by women who graduated from the elite eastern women's colleges.

Friedan herself is a 1942 graduate of Smith College, and her study relies heavily on her interviews with alumnae from Smith College and a 1956 study of Vassar women. These women are likely to be significantly more affluent and sometimes more intellectual than the average American college woman. I think she had a tendency to assume that all college women are like the ones she

knew. Such an assumption skews her reporting.

The women she seemed most often to rely on went to elite colleges, an indication of affluence of many of their families. Many of them married so well that they had the option of taking women's exaggerated domestic role seriously. More so than average college educated women, they were likely to have the financial resources to remain home with their children, even after their children had entered school. In a forthcoming book, *The Invisible Careers of Women*, sociologist Arlene Kaplan Daniels argues that priveleged women of the upper middle and upper class are expected to put their families first and not to do paid work. Although her premise is based on recent interviews, I suspect that the expectations she found would have been ever more restrictive in the 1950s and 60s, and perhaps this phenonmenon is what Friedan saw in her study (Daniels) . At least some of Friedan's women did not find the options of domesticity and volunteerism sufficiently satisfactory and thus suffered from the feminine mystique.

A second inference that can be drawn from Friedan's women is that they were highly intelligent, and Friedan quotes a Smith College professor to support that assumption; she herself recalls from the 1940s vigorous intellectual debates over class topics (144). She maintains that domestic chores did not challenge these women, thus additionally contributing to the problem that has no name (237). I remain unconvinced that the majority of women found homemaking to be that boring; the only woman in my sample who rebelled against the domestic role came from the family which I perceived to be the most intellectual. I suspect a connection between intellectual ability and dissatisfaction with housework,

and for some women paid work is the most satisfactory solution to their dilemma.

A totally unexpected result of my study was concluding how pervasive the easter college perspective was in much of the researach on college women's experiences. I have already discussed such emphasis in Friedan's work. As I looked over several supporting sources, I realized that it pervades other works too, even those of the 1980s, such as Barbara Miller Solomon's *In the Company of Educated Women* and Mirra Komarovsky's *Women in College.* The reason for this perspective is fairly obvious. The Seven Sisters have been devoted to women's education for a long time and have kept detailed records of their accomplishments. Not only have they provided an excellent sociological laboratory for the study of women (Komarovsky), but also they have archival sources on women's education unequalled elsewhere. Any scholar who has examined the history of women's education knows that appropriate sources are not easy to locate and so the treasure trove provided by the archives of the Seven Sisters and the Schelesinger Library at Harvard-Radcliffe are most welcome. However, heavy reliance on these sources can skew one's scholarly perspective.

The discrepancies between Friedan's book and my research are not meant to throw *The Feminine Mystique* into disrepute. The book is an excellent rebuttal of the "sex is destiny" theme which ran so clearly in the first two decades after World War II, and it was a spark in re-igniting the fires of feminism which had burned low for forty years. However, as I now read through *The Feminine Mystique* twenty-two years after my first encounter with it, I still see and feel much of the same anger I originally did. However, this time,

older and wiser, I am not swept away by its generalizations that every woman suffers from the problem that has no name. From my research and from personal observation, I am no longer willing to believe that every Southern woman was bound so tightly by the bonds by the domestic expectations known as the feminist mystique.

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Appendix A

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background information

Where were you born? Would you share some information about your family background?

How important was getting an education in your family? Did the sex of a child make a difference in the family's educational expectations?

When did you attend _____*? For how many years?

Why did you choose this institution?

What role did your parents play in your decision to attend _____?

What were their expectations for your education?

How old were you when you first began attending?

Your instructional experiences,

What was your major? What were your goals when you began your higher education? Did _____ prepare you adequately for accomplishing your goals? How?

How would you evaluate the quality of your instructors? Were the majority of them male or female? How did their qualifications compare?

Could you perceive any difference in the way that _____ treated male and female faculty? Do you remember, for example, any difference in rank, responsibilities, or respect?

How did the faculty treat you as a person? Would you relate some anecdotes about your experience with the faculty?

At the time did you perceive any difference in treatment of students according to their sex? (coeducational institutions only)

If you had exposure to male student life at the time (a brother or male friend in college), how did your academic experiences compare to his?

Did the faculty encourage you to follow through with or change your goals? Why and how?

How did they change as you continued your education?

* Name of the interviewee's institution

Did _____ treat female students in a certain way because of their sex? Describe some of these ways, and feel free to use anecdotes to describe them.

Can you recall some of the rules of _____ about appropriate behavior? dress? associating with men?

Did _____'s rules mirror the standards of the time or were they possibly out of date? In what ways?

How well did students accept the rules? Was there much griping? Did the rules change while you were a stduent?

Would you be able to compare female student life to male student life at the time?

Were you employed while you were in college? If so, why and in what capacity?

Your Fellow Students

How did your background compare to that of most students at _____?

How did your plans compare to most female students at _____?

What did you learn from your college friends about academics, appriate behavior, men and boys? What lessons were most valuable?

What were your chief entertainments in college? To what degree were these sponsored by _____? If sponsored by _____, what do you think their purpose was supposed to be? If these activities were student initiated, to what degree did _____ give support?

What were some of the fads at the time? To what degree did _____ try to support or suppress them? Why?

Further Information Do you have any materials about _____ (student handbooks, annuals, photographs, catalogs, student publications) that you would be willing to let me examine at the site of our interview or to borrow for a few days?

Appendix B

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Kind of institution	public women's colege	public women's colege	private coed. univ.	private coed. univ.	private women's college	private coed. univ.	private coed. college	private women's college	public tech. univ.	private women's college
Different expectations for each sex	I*	no	unknown	unknown	no	yes	yes	unknown	unknown	I*
Role models										
H.s. teacher	-	-	-	-	yes	-	-	-	yes	-
Mother	yes	-	-	-	-	-	yes	-	-	yes
Col. prof.	yes	-	no	-	yes	-	yes	yes	-	yes
Dept. head	-	-	-	-	-	-	yes	yes	yes	yes
Other	-	-	-	-	yes	-	-	yes	yes	-
Work in college	unknown	office	none	none	library housekeeping	unknown	none	none	library baby-sitting	switchb'd hostess desk; library
Work in summer	unknown	unknown	family business	family business	unknown	unknown	unknown	family business	unknown	camp office
Career expectations										
Parents	unknown	teacher	none	none	unknown	nurse or teacher	teacher	none	unknown	unknown
Interviewee	clothing designer	secretary	none	none	unknown	teacher	teacher	none	teacher	unknown
Actual career	pubic relations	secretary	homemaker	homemaker	librarian	homemaker	teacher	homemaker	engineer	teacher

*Inapplicable

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Kind of institution	public women's colege	public women's colege	private coed. univ.	private coed. univ.	private women's college	private coed. univ.	private coed. college	private women's college	public tech. univ.	private women's college
Race	white	white	white	white	black	white	black	white	white	white
When married	unmarried	1 yr.	1 yr.	1 yr.	unmarried	1 yr.		1 yr.	1 yr.	1 yr.
Major	art	business	humanities	English	history	English	el ed	German	e.engin.	psy.
Gr. Year	1967	1955	1956	1956	1956	1957	1956	1949	1956	1965
Class	middle	farm	upper	upper	middle	middle	middle	up.middle	farm	middle
Birth order	only	3rd older boy older girl SB younger girl	not available	not available	oldest younger girl 2 younger boys	3rd 2 older boys younger girl	3rd 2 older boys	1st of 3 2 younger boys	2nd of 4 2 boys 2nd girl	1st of 2 younger girl
Parental education		valued								
Father	12	less than 12	unknown	M.D.	unknown	M.D.	4 years college	1 year college	unknown	unknown
Mother	4 years college	less than 12	2 years college	unknown	unknown	4 years college	4 years college	no college	unknown	4 years college
Parental occupation										
Father	business	farmer	unknown	doctor	mail carrier homemaker until death of husband	med. prof deceased	minister homemaker until death of husband	business homemaker	farmer homemaker	unknown
Mother	teacher	homemaker	homemaker	homemaker						unknown